FACT SHEET

from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the
U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission

April 1999

This fact sheet:

- ✔ ***Provides general information about the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant.***
- ✔ ***Describes the U.S. EPA and the U.S. IBWC's recommendation for the completely mixed aerated pond system for secondary treatment at the plant.***

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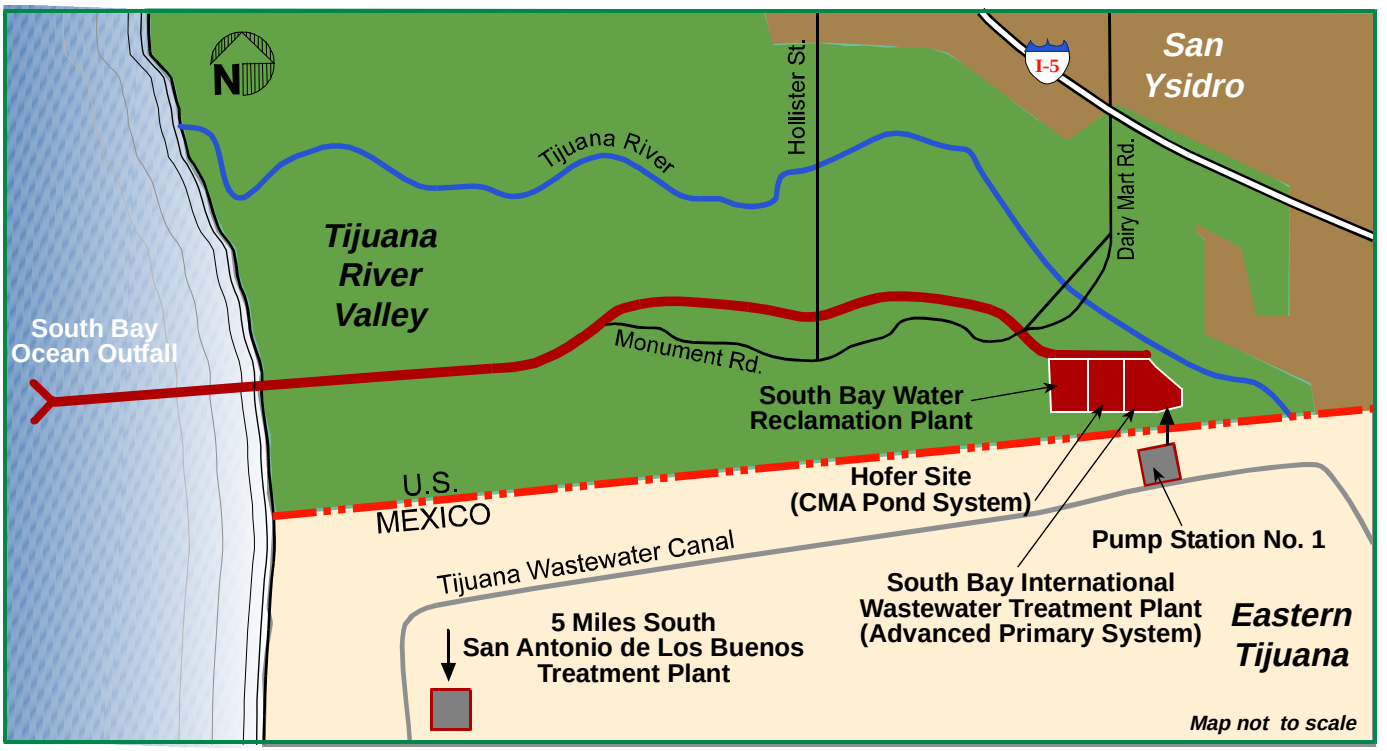
About the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant

Untreated sewage, flowing from Tijuana through the Tijuana River and into the Pacific Ocean, has adversely impacted the South Bay communities of San Diego County, the Tijuana River valley and estuary, and coastal waters of the U.S. These flows have posed a serious threat to the public health and economy of the region. In the early 1980s, the U.S. and Mexican governments sought to develop a permanent solution to the San Diego/Tijuana sewage problem. Numerous alternatives were considered, and an international wastewater treatment plant located in the U.S. was selected as the best alternative. As a result, the U.S. and Mexican governments formally agreed to construct the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant to treat and dispose of the Tijuana sewage. The plant will play a key role in restoring the environmental quality of the Tijuana River Valley and safeguarding the health of its residents.

The plant is located at a 75-acre site just west of San Ysidro near the intersection of Dairy Mart and Monument Roads. It is being constructed in phases in order to provide treatment as quickly as possible. The construction of the first phase, an advanced primary treatment plant, was completed in 1997. Presently, an average of 25 million gallons per day of wastewater is treated and discharged into the Pacific Ocean through a wastewater pipeline.

The plant's advanced primary treated wastewater is frequently monitored to ensure that it meets all state and federal standards. Testing is also conducted regularly to monitor for negative impacts to the ocean environment from the discharge of treated wastewater. Ocean water, fish, and sediment samples are collected routinely as part of this testing.



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Need for Additional Treatment

Most wastewater treatment plants in the United States provide both primary and secondary treatment. An exception to this is the City of San Diego's Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is an advanced primary plant. Due to strict efforts by the City to control wastewater quality entering the Point Loma Plant and special legislation, the City of San Diego is able to meet discharge standards without secondary treatment.

Regular testing of the advanced primary wastewater has shown that, although the plant meets most state and federal standards, there are some exceptions. The U.S. EPA and U.S. IBWC, with the input of many local, state, and federal agencies, and the public, have studied the need to build secondary treatment facilities. In order to fully protect public health and coastal resources, the agencies are now proposing to construct secondary treatment facilities at the plant.

A Proposed Solution

In March 1999, the U.S. EPA and the U.S. IBWC completed a study called the Long Term Treatment Options Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement which identifies the next step in upgrading the plant to better protect the San Diego/Tijuana community. This study recommends the construction of completely mixed aerated ponds to provide secondary treatment to the Tijuana wastewater. The ponds would be located between the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant and the City of San Diego's South Bay Water Reclamation Plant, currently under construction. The pond system, which is a series of fully lined basins, exposes wastewater to beneficial bacteria. These bacteria consume the pollutants in the wastewater, cleaning the wastewater and making it more suitable for discharge to the ocean.

The U.S. EPA and the U.S. IBWC are recommending the pond system since it is:

- ✔ **Reliable:** The amount and type of pollutants in the Tijuana sewage treated at the plant fluctuates. The pond system is better able to handle these fluctuations than other treatment technologies.
- ✔ **Cost Effective:** The cost of construction, operation, and maintenance of the pond system will be substantially lower than with other technologies considered in the study. The construction of the pond system will conserve funds for use on other environmental projects in the Tijuana/San Diego area.
- ✔ **Quick:** The ponds can be built the fastest, providing cleaner wastewater by the beginning of 2001.

Other Considerations

The U.S. EPA and the U.S. IBWC also considered other factors in recommending the pond system. These factors included the ability of the pond system to control odors and prevent pests, and the ability to expand the plant beyond its current size. The pond system's reliability helps to protect against odors, since other treatment systems can be more easily upset by high levels of pollutants in the wastewater. The fully lined basins that make up the pond system will include surface aeration to further reduce odors and prevent mosquitoes and flies from landing and breeding. As for expansion of the pond system, additional treatment facilities could be built at the plant site.

What do you think?

Our goal is to complete the plant in a manner that is responsive to the San Diego/Tijuana community. The U.S. EPA and the U.S. IBWC are interested in hearing from you regarding our proposal to construct the pond system, and other feasible alternatives. A workshop is being held at Southwest High School on April 12, 1999 at 5pm to provide information and to answer questions on the plant and the pond system. Public comments on the proposal will be taken at a Public Hearing at 7pm, immediately following the workshop. A Spanish translator will be available at the workshop and the Public Hearing. Written comments on the proposal will be taken until 5pm on April 19, 1999.

More information about the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant can be found at the following websites:

http://www.epa.gov/region09/water/iwtp

http://www.ibwc.state.gov/psbay.htm